

THE LATVIAN MYTHOLOGICAL SPACE IN SCHOLARLY TIME

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Abstract

Mythological space is a scholarly construct, related to various disciplines and representing different research agendas, theoretical standpoints and institutional affiliations. As such, it is illustrated in this article by three case studies relating to reconstructions of the Latvian mythological space. The work of Ludvigs Adamovičs represents the conceptualisation and description of the mythological space in interwar period studies of ancient religion. His views are contested and elaborated by Haralds Biezais in the postwar period within the émigré academic environment. Finally, studies of mythological space by Janīna Kursīte represent the most recent scholarly production in this direction.

Key words: Latvian mythology, intellectual history, mythological space, scholarly time, Ludvigs Adamovičs, Haralds Biezais, Janīna Kursīte.

Introduction

This article addresses the construction of a particular object of scholarly research, Latvian mythological space. As such, it will fulfil two tasks: firstly, it will describe and analyse particular models of mythological space created during the development of Latvian folkloristics and studies of religion; and secondly, it will provide a critical insight into the scholarly environments where these models were created and discussed, thus exploring possibilities for reciprocal links between the creation of the research object and the research results. Mythological research has always blurred disciplinary boundaries, overlapping the borders of fields such as folkloristics, the study of religion, linguistics and history. Therefore, the history of mythology as a scholarly construct requires a framework to map mutual relations of disciplines, theoretical schools, institutions and scholars involved in each particular study of myths. As there are no records of an explicit theory of mythological world structure created by ancient Latvians themselves, this article will be a reconstruction of the construct. The constructed nature of the research object raises questions as to its epistemological basis, as well as the purposes of its emergence. As such, from a broader perspective, it could be related to Michel Foucault's analysis of relations between power and knowledge production, and mechanisms of how the so-called 'human-sciences' invent, construct or discover their objects of study (Kuutma 2006, p.18; Foucault 1980). An appropriate, one could say deconstructive, analysis has already been applied to mythology-related fields of studies: for example, to the politics of religious studies (Junginger 2008), the ideological determination of history as a scholarly practice (Nisbet 1999; Hroch 1999), the role of folklor-

istics in building the national consciousness (Anttonen 2005; Bendix 1997), and the political involvement of anthropological and ethnographical studies (Kuutma 2006; Ó'Giolláin 2000). However, the construction of mythology has mostly been overlooked, perhaps due to its specific location between disciplines, and its tendency to construct a self-contained realm of knowledge.

'In this investigation it will be found that there are two pure forms of sensible intuition as principles of a priori cognition, namely space and time, with the assessment of which we will now be concerned.' These are the opening words of *Critique of Pure Reason* by Immanuel Kant (Kant 1998, p.157). Although from a slightly different perspective, this article will also proceed along similar line. The epistemological turn towards 'pure forms' has also influenced studies of mythology, creating an impressive variety of works concerned with the reconstruction of mythical space and time from the most abstract level, analysing mythical consciousness, another scholarly construct of the 20th century, to studies of world structure in mythologies of certain nations or other groups. A particular worldview created by mythical consciousness and rendered through mythical perception has been described by Ernst Cassirer (Cassirer 1965; 1967), also elaborating on the notion of mythical space within it characterised by various determinations according to the nature of this form of consciousness. Cassirer shares with Mircea Eliade the concept of sacrality. Juxtaposed against a profane or common dimension, sacrality becomes the main characteristic of the mythological space (Eliade 1996; 1999) and of the mythological world in general. The functionality of the sacral zones in space has been described by Arnold van Gennap (1960) in his influ-

ential theory on rites of passage. Serious attention to space has also been paid within the theory of structuralism (Meletinskij 1973; Douglas 1996; Levi-Strauss 1996) through analyses of different levels of mythical narratives. An important field of reference regarding the subject matter is also to be found in the studies of Indo-European and Proto-Indo-European themes within different disciplines. The benchmark in this field is the theory of tripartite Indo-European ideology developed by Georges Dumézil (1996). His discovery of the omnipresent tripartite functional structure has been elaborated into complicated mythical geographies, as well as criticised and complimented (Lincoln 1986; 1991; Lyle 1982). The ancient Indo-European mythological space has also been analysed by scholars of the Moscow-Tartu School of Semiotics, involving the Latvian language and mythology in comparative analysis (Gamkrelidze, Ivanov 1995). The majority of these approaches reverberate to some extent through constructs of the Latvian mythological space. Still, there are only a few works that deal with the subject explicitly, describing the structure, semantics and strategic dispositions within the mythological space. Mostly, this is effected through notions of *the other world*, *Heaven*, *the underworld*, the hero's journey and the sun's way in the sky. The majority of the works touch upon spatial relationships indirectly, through implicit statements accompanying descriptions of pantheons, mythical events, heroes and other issues.

Time is important in three ways in relation to mythological space. First of all, it is so-called mythological time or special modes of time characteristic of the same form of consciousness (perceptions, narration, depending on the researcher's standing) that shape mythological space. Certain temporal factors have also been described in models of Latvian mythological space (Straubergs 1922; Adamovičs 1937; Kursīte 1999). Secondly, time enters mythological research with attempts to date the age of a phenomenon. To which century should the world-view belong that is extracted from an analysis of folklore materials recorded during the 19th or 20th centuries and secondary sources that are several centuries older? Some researchers who have their own hypothesis of Latvian mythological space have identified a golden age of Latvian mythology during the Bronze Age or Iron Age (Šmits 1926; Švābe 1923); some speak of the Late Iron Age in particular (Adamovičs 1937), or the syncretism of later ages (Adamovičs 1940b). In turn, some use the arrival of Indo-European tribes as a demarcation line that divides two different world orders; whereas others synthesise Indo-European and more ancient world-views together into a kind of unhistorical, one could say mythological, time (Kursīte 1999; Toporov 1986).

Ultimately, time constitutes mythological space as a scholarly time, historical conditions of research. Scholarly time is a diachronic, heterogeneous set of flows that allows the classification and tracking of the different trajectories that research into Latvian mythology has taken. Flows of scholarly time can be parallel; they are characterised by continuities and discontinuities, partial transmission and theoretical dead-ends. This reflects all ideologies, practices, methodologies, personal alignments, and material and institutional preconditions regarding any scholarly research at a particular historical moment. The very concept of mythological space is anchored in its own scholarly time. To reconstruct these conditions of knowledge production, I propose to explore scholarly and popular works, biographies and autobiographies of the scholars involved, and contemporary theories and historical ideologies. Only an ongoing comparison of text and the context of its creation shows why particular sources are chosen for the construction of Latvian mythology, which research goals are set, what kind of research is carried out, and how it is characterised by continuities and discontinuities over longer periods of time. Complementing the research I am doing at the Archives of Latvian Folklore regarding personalities in Latvian folklore, the methodology of this article is similar to the one applied in the biggest recent project of disciplinary history carried out in Estonia (Kuutma, Jaago 2005).

General background and sources of Latvian mythology

Research into Latvian mythology has always been shaped by tension between ethnic, regional, linguistic and political markers. These factors, often far from fully articulated, legitimise one or another definition of the research subject, Latvian mythology.¹ Ethnicity, which is a given fact for 20th-century researchers, was not a historical reality due to the formation of the Latvian nation as late as during the second half of the 19th century. In reconstructions of Latvian mythology, ethnicity is in a way backdated to the tribal society of the Late Iron Age or even earlier (Adamovičs 1937). The tribes that inhabited contemporary Latvia were far from united politically, and their beliefs differed, depending, for example, on Scandinavian influences in the southwest or Slavic ones in the east, or Livonian ones (the Liivi were a tribe of Finno-Ugric origin) in the coastal region (Baltic states 2010). Interestingly, Livonians, who historically inhabited a rather large part of Latvia, are totally excluded from all the major

¹ For more on the background and role of folkloristics in the construction of Latvian national ideology in the 19th century, see Bula 2000.

works on Latvian mythology, and, with a few exceptions, are marginalised as an alien influence on later Latvian mono-ethnic beliefs.

One of the conceptual models in research into Latvian mythology that allows this exclusion is based on comparative linguistics. The Latvian language belongs to the Indo-European family of languages, representing a branch of the Baltic languages (which also includes Latgalian, Lithuanian, Samogitian and several extinct languages, such as Old Prussian, Galindian, Sudovian, Old Curonian, Selonian, and so on) (Baltic languages 2010). It is tempting to assume that cultural similarities are identical to linguistic similarities. Theories on the migration and development of languages also allow for the cultural heritage to be dated back to the times of the hypothetical Proto-Indo-European language, spoken by the Proto-Indo-European community (Šmits 1926). Several mythological research strategies emerge from recognised linguistic affinities. In many ways, a language-based model contradicts regional history. The Baltic States are a geopolitical unity formed by three independent countries, first established after the First World War: Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. While linguistically Latvia is closely related to Lithuania, a common history unites it more closely with Estonia. The Estonian language belongs to the Finno-Ugric family of languages. Contemporary Latvia and Estonia had common inhabitants before the arrival of their Indo-European ancestors (Baltic States 2010), and after the arrival of the Crusaders in the late 12th century they formed one political unity, Livonia, for several centuries. After the schism in Western Christianity, Estonia and most of Latvia became predominantly Protestant regions, while eastern Latvia and Lithuania were predominantly Catholic. Estonia and Livonia were integrated into the Russian Empire in 1710, and joined by Lithuania at the end of the 18th century (Latvia 2010; Baltic States 2010). We should note that: 'The emergence of something Latvian next to Lithuanian, or Estonian alongside these two, was not the straightforward instrumentalisation of a well-demarcated, recognised individual ethnicity, but the result of deliberate (and often contested) acts of demarcation and identification' (Leerssen 2006, p.167).

Mythological research and folklore in general played their role in this process (Bula 2000; Kuutma, Jaago 2005). Radically different regimes of knowledge production duly create different versions of Latvian mythology during the post-Second World War period, as is represented by Soviet Latvian researchers on the one hand, and by exiled Latvian researchers on the other hand. This parallel research results in a problematic fusion during the 1990s, at which time the continuity of research from the interwar period with its agenda is in-

formed by postwar developments in Latvia and abroad, also incorporating the last theoretical trends developed in the Soviet Union. The aforementioned factors also influence preferences for one or another source used in constructions of particular models of Latvian mythology and mythological space.

These reconstructions are mainly based on two groups of sources, historical records (chronicles, church visitation records, and so on) which mention certain cult practices or names of deities, and folklore material that was collected, with a few exceptions, as late as starting from the second half of the 19th century. The collection, editing and publication of the folklore material still continue today. However, all larger bodies of texts were already published prior to 1944, and were therefore equally available to all researchers of the postwar period. The availability of historical records differed during the first half of the 20th century: the majority of records were available to a wider public in the 1930s, courtesy of a reprint of Wilhelm Mannhardt's *Letto-Preußische Götterlehre* (1936), the publication of sources of Latvian history in Arnolds Spekke's *Latvieši un Livonija 16. g. s.* (1935) and *Die Jahresberichte der Gesellschaft Jesu über ihre Wirksamkeit in Riga und Dorpat 1583-1614* (1925) by Edith Kurtz and *Baznīcas visitācijas protokoli* (1931) by K. Bregžis (Adamovičs 1940d).

Several authors from the interwar period have discussed widely the historical sources available for their mythological research, although in the ensuing analysis not all of them provide correct references to the sources used. Thus, Pēteris Šmits (1926) lists the historical records of the 18th century in detail. Following the literary tradition, early authors rewrote each other's texts, also non-critically adding all the available data from the mythologies of neighbouring regions, thus creating a list of gods that were later used in the composition of Latvian mythical pseudo-pantheons by 19th-century romanticists. As the latter were the subject of Šmits' critique, their sources are described and analysed in *Latvian mythology* (Šmits 1926). With regard to the historical records of the 18th century that in a way assimilate many early sources, Šmits (1926) and other authors (Straubergs 1934; Adamovičs 1940c *et al.*) usually mention August Wilhelm Hupel's *Topographische Nachrichten von Lief- und Ehsland* (1774–1782), and *Vollständiges deutschlettisches und lettischdeutsches Lexicon* (1777) by Jacob Lange. The latter includes and elaborates information from the *Gelehrte Beyträge zu den Rigischen Anzeigen* newspaper, in which the first Latvian pseudo-pantheon was published in Riga by an unknown author in 1761, and by Johann Jacob Harder in 1764. Lange's lexicon is also the source of the mythological appendix of *Lett-*

ische Grammatik by Gotthard Friedrich Stender (2nd ed, 1783). Among the most comprehensive reports of historical records mentioning mythological beings and practices are several articles by Kārlis Straubergs (Straubergs 1934; 1949; 1943). Straubergs also provides an overview of sources of Lithuanian and Prussian mythologies, further listing the documents he has used in his reconstruction of genuine Latvian mythology. The first record of religious practices in the region was found in *De Germania* (98 AD) by the Roman historian Tacitus. Early but rather poor references on the subject are also provided by Adam of Bremen in his chronicle *Gesta Hammaburgensis Ecclesiae Pontificum* (1075), a bull issued by Pope Innocent III (1199), the writings of Oliverus von Paderborn (1212) and Ghillebert de Lannoy (1413), and the statutes of the city of Riga *Statuta provincialia concilli Rigensis* (1428). More evidence was recorded in the 16th and 17th centuries. Examples of this include *Cosmographia* by Sebastian Münster (1550), the travel notes of Johann David Wunderer (1589) and Reinhold Lubenau (1585), a report by Salomon Henning (1589), *Chronica der Prouintz Lyfflandt* by Balthasar Russow (1584), the annual reports of Jesuit collegiums, *Encomion Urbis Rigae* by Heinrich Ulenbrock (1615), *Livonicae Historiae Compendiosa Series* by Dionysius Fabricius (1611–1620), protocols of legal proceedings (especially witch and werewolf trials), and the works by Paul Einhorn *Wiederlunge der Abgötterey* (1627), *Reformatio gentis Letticae* (1636) and *Historia Lettica, das ist Beschreibung der Lettischen nation* (1649). Various customs were also described by Christian Kelch in his *Liefländische Historia* (1695).² As these early records were rather fragmentary and heavily influenced by the agendas of their authors, most of whom were members of the clergy and of whom only a few understood the local languages, they remain only as a secondary source that can be used to support hypotheses based on studies of folklore materials.

The most important source in reconstructions of Latvian mythology, as will also be seen in the following case studies, was folk songs. *Latvju dainas*, the first fundamental edition of folk songs, was published by Krišjānis Barons and Henry Wissendorff in six volumes from 1884 to 1915 (with two more editions in 1922–1923 and 1989–1994). Thirteen years later, it was followed by an edition of *Latvju tautas dainas* by Roberts Kļaušņiņš in 12 volumes. In 1936, the Archives of Latvian Folklore published *Tautas dziesmas*, a sequel to *Latvju Dainas*, consisting of newly collected texts. After the Second World War, exiled Latvians in Copenhagen published *Latviešu tautas dziesmas* in 12

volumes (1952–1956), combining the Barons and the Archives of Latvian Folklore editions. At the same time (1955), a selection of folk songs was published in Soviet Latvia by the successors of the Archives of Latvian Folklore, the Institute of Ethnography and Folklore. All three volumes came up with a new classification system, one foregrounding social relationships. The first volume of the academic folk song edition, *Latviešu tautasdziesmas*, was published in 1979 (for the publishing history of these and later-mentioned definitive editions of Latvian folklore material, see Ambainis 1989, pp.67–87, or Archives of Latvian Folklore 2011). This work still continues today: nine out of the 15 planned volumes have now been published.

The first basic collection of Latvian folk tales and legends in six volumes was published by Ansis Lehtis-Puškaitis in 1890–1891. His material was supplemented and arranged according to the classification by Arveds Švābe (1923) in two volumes, and by Pēteris Šmits (1925–1937) in 15 volumes. The Latvian Folk Tale Type Index, based on the same classification system, was published in 1977 (Ambainis 1989, p.115). The Latvian exile community republished the 15 tomes of Šmits' folk tales and legends (1963–1970) in the USA (Ambainis 1989, p.123). Charms, beliefs and customs for researchers in the first half of the 20th century were available mainly from publications in nationally oriented periodicals of the last 50 years, the collection by Fricis Brīvzemnieks-Treuland (1881), the appendices of Barons and Wissendorff's folk song edition, and material gathered in the Archives of Latvian Folklore. *Latvian charms* in two volumes was published only in 1939–1941 by Kārlis Straubergs, and *Latvian folk beliefs* in four tomes was published in 1940–1941 by Pēteris Šmits. The basic edition of *Latvian folk customs* was published in 1944 by Kārlis Straubergs (Ambainis 1989, p.88). The three following case studies examine the different versions of the reconstructed Latvian space, demonstrating the choice of particular sources and the relation of this choice to disciplinary and theoretical agendas, the intellectual environment, and particular theories.

Ludvigs Adamovičs

Ludvigs (Ludis) Adamovičs (1884–1943) was a Protestant priest, theologian and Church historian, and also the minister of education of the Republic of Latvia from 19 May 1934 to 10 July 1935 in the heyday of the nationalist authoritarian regime established by Kārlis Ulmanis after a coup d'état in 1934. A theology graduate from the University of Dorpat (Tartu), after a short time in the Church he became an associate professor of theology at the University of Latvia in 1920.

² Almost all the works mentioned here are republished in Vēlius 1996–2005.

Deported in 1941, he died two years later (Kiploks 1993). The scholarly interests of Adamovičs consisted mostly of research into the history of the Protestant Church in Latvia, until the second half of the 1930s, when he started to publish articles on issues of Latvian mythology, paying special interest to the deity Jumis (Adamovičs 1932; 1940a), the household daemon *pūķis* ‘the dragon’ (Adamovičs 1940b), ancient cosmology regarding a stairway to Heaven and the heavenly yard in folk songs (Adamovičs 1938; 1940c), and the phenomenological reconstruction of the ancient Latvian religion (Adamovičs 1937; 1940d). Published in the last years of the interwar period, his work represents the most sophisticated system of Latvian mythology created during this period. His theological background enabled him to apply an approach that was different to that of his fellow scholars, historians and philologists. His programme for studying Latvian religion or mythology is based on the theory of the phenomenology of religion, referring to the Dutch scholar Gerardus van der Leeuw and the hypotheses of differentiation and integration as the main processes that characterise religion as a dynamic system (Adamovičs 1936 *et al.*).

Ancient Latvian world view (1938) is perhaps still the most complete description of spatial dispositions in Latvian mythology. At the same time, this 40-page article summarises and questions all previous research on the issues analysed. Later, the author summarised his concept of mythological space according to three themes, quoted here at length to illustrate the typical form of such reconstructions in the interwar period:

‘1. The Heavenly Mountain. Ancient Latvians have imagined the sky in the form of a high mountain, called the Mountain of Pebbles, Silver Mountain or Ice Mountain. The first two designations denote a spangled sky, while the third derives from an explanatory myth on the formation of snow. The Heavenly Mountain descends into the World Sea. In several folk songs, the mountain has been transformed into a table with four corners. On this mountain, or by it, or around it, or otherwise, the Sun moves on its daily orbit. Completing it at the foot of the Mountain, she (the Sun) starts her night return-patch through the World Sea and the underworld in a silver or gold boat. Changing the mode of movement at the sea, the Sun swims her horses. In areas where such a clear notion of the sea being in the West is absent, the Sun sets on a lake, the great river Daugava, or in some mythical place where there are nine lakes, or where nine rivers meet.

‘Some songs depict the Sun in unceasing movement, but some tell of her resting in the middle of the day or sleeping at night. These songs testify to the developing

anthropomorphisation that distinguishes the mythological figure of the Sun from her natural basis, the sun.

‘Furthermore, the ways of the ancient Latvian God (the Heavenly Father) on the Heavenly Mountain are depicted mainly as driving, across a hill or reed, gravel or copper bridge, that is, a rainbow. The most frequently sung about is his trip “down the hill”.

‘2. The Sun Tree. Ancient Latvians were aware of the special Sun Tree, which is a particular derivation of the mythical World Tree, a projection of the Milky Way in myths. In the descriptions of this tree, bright precious metals, silver and gold, are not spared. A frequent depiction presents the tree as a birch tree with three leaves or forked branches where the Sun, the Moon, God, Laima, Auseklis (the morning star), or the Daughter of the Sun rest or act.³ Moreover, it seems that the setting and rising of the Sun is always connected with the same tree.

‘The mythical place where the Sun Tree grows is “at the side of the Sun’s path” or “at the side of the sea path”. This is in the far west, where the Sun’s daily orbit ends, by the sea, beyond the lake, in the Daugava; in other words, by the mythical border zone of this world, where the natural horizon is visible and the slope of the Heavenly Mountain approaches the Earth. Laying its roots here, the Sun Tree extends all over the sky, and appears as the true tree of Heaven.

‘This is how Ancient Latvians have imagined that beyond all lakes and hills at the very edge of the earth or seaside, the borders of this world, Heaven (the Heavenly Mountain) and the underworld (“the other world”) meet. There grows the mythical Heavenly Tree, in whose branches the Sun, the Moon and other heavenly bodies each settle at a particular time. There, the Sun rose every morning, and adorned herself and her daughters, to shine all over the world.

‘Perhaps at the beginning, this Sun Tree was imagined in the shape of a wonderful shining oak (“golden branches, silver leaves”), but later free poetic fantasy lost the real mythical meaning of the Sun Tree and started to imagine other trees also like the Sun oak, imagining them “at the side of the Sun’s orbit”. Around this time, the mythical notion of this path also ceased to exist. There only remained the abstract notion of a Sun Tree that could be applied to an oak or a lime, birch, willow, hazel or sallow, or even to a rush. In the end, the oak was placed in the mythical heavenly Daugava, which, according to its origins, is the same Sun Tree, a projection of the Milky Way in the world of myths. But the slender rush remained on a stone or on an island in

³ In Latvian, Saule, Mēness, Dievs, Laima, Auseklis, Saules meita.

the middle of the sea, or beyond the sea that (stone) is the landmark of this and the other world, on the very horizon. Some songs suggest that in their imaginations the inhabitants of particular farms also decorated their sacred oaks (sacrificial oaks) with elements of the Sun Tree myth. Other songs imagine the Sun as an apple, a pea, a nut or a ball that rolls along the branches of the Sun Tree.

‘3. Three levels of the world. Overall, the Ancient Latvian God means the sky: there, his dwelling place must be. Folk songs that tell of God sleeping on the Earth (under a stone, in a bush of vervains) do not seem to be taken seriously in the reconstruction of myths. An idea propagated by Professor Kārlis Straubergs and outlined in the article *World Sea* (Straubergs 1937) that God, the Sun and the Moon dwell in the underworld does not seem well founded. The ancient Latvians do not separate this and the opposite world; instead they separate three levels of the world: Heaven, Earth and the underworld that meet in the World Sea on the horizon. The path from one level to another leads through the horizon and across the World Sea.

‘Direct traffic in a vertical direction is also possible. From the Earth it is possible to get to Heaven by a heavenly stairway: the branches and leaves of a tree, a beanstalk or a rose. The direct route to the underworld is depicted in fairy tales: it goes into the Earth through a well, a spring, a deep cave, or a hole. These fairy tales already know and mention the other way: from the underworld one can get on to the Earth across the World Sea and through the horizon. They also know about travelling to the sky: there and back. Sometimes special stairs are used, but a direct path to Heaven is also familiar, via smoke or broom, and coming down by a rope that is fastened to a cloud. But fairy tales also relate that it is possible to go to Heaven across a big sea, that is, through the horizon. There is a crossroads where three roads meet or separate: to Heaven, Earth and the underworld.

‘In their basic elements, these views of the Ancient Latvians concur with general notions of the world-view and the World Tree as they are depicted by W. Wundt (1909), but the Latvians have their features; nice poetic depictions stand out especially’ (Adamovičs 1940b, pp.364-366).

So, according to Adamovičs, mythological space consists of variations between mutually displaceable semanthemes and a basic structure of three levels, namely the underworld, this world, and Heaven. Variations across the genres, within one genre and across geographical locations where particular folklore materials are collected, are problematic, considering one fixed Ancient Latvian world-view and cosmology. Af-

ter describing a variety of Sun Trees, the author himself states that: ‘Such examples are more likely evidence of free combinations of mythical folk songs than the basis of joining them all together in one view’ (Adamovičs 1938, p.22).

Still, by trying to provide a logical description of mythological space, Adamovičs uses various devices of interpretation to establish one primary system, regarding which other variations are seen as deviations akin to a course of profanation. An eloquent illustration of such an interpretation is an example of the World Sea semantheme. Adamovičs refers several times to the article *World Sea* (1937) by Straubergs. In the latter, the classical philologist refers to the Ancient Greek myth of the Ocean that flows all around the world (Straubergs 1937, p.169). Adamovičs accepts the notion of the sea all around the world; still, a closer analysis of folklore material shows this assumption to be somewhat problematic with regard to the folklore of eastern Latvia, that is, regions that are further away from the Baltic coast. As there is no evidence of the notion of the sea or any other large body of water in an eastern direction, the author just notes that ‘folklore regarding this matter was somewhat reserved’ (Adamovičs 1938, p.4). Furthermore, the author claims that: ‘Regarding the position of the sunset, as we can see, empirical experience in the eastern part of Latvia has overshadowed the notion of the World Sea. It is substituted by the lake and the broad Daugava, besides the mythical places “beyond the nine lakes” or “where the nine rivers flow”’ (Adamovičs 1938, p.7).

However, during the course of further investigation, the World Sea remains important only as far as it is located in the West, because that is the place where, according to Adamovičs, all three levels of the world meet. While folklore materials provide different locations of passages between the worlds, Adamovičs refers here to the comparative study by Wundt (Adamovičs 1938, p.31; Wundt 1909, p.220). Therefore, a mention of the sea or the River Daugava in connection with the sunset is also interpreted as a reference to the ‘far west, mythical border zone of the world where a natural horizon is visible’ (Adamovičs 1938, p.23ff). Following this example, other references to the sea are reduced to the World Sea in the west.

A similar pattern of interpretation also characterises the author’s analysis of the World Tree. Likewise, he refers to Wundt’s idea that: ‘The World Tree spreads its roots among the depths of the Earth and reaches the sky with its branches, holding together the whole world, being in the middle of the Earth itself, which overshadows whole world with its leaves and hosts heavenly bodies in its branches. The prototype of the World Tree is

the Tree of Life' (Adamovičs 1938, p.15; Wundt 1909, pp.193, 210, 214, 219).

The author finds the Sun Tree to be the main Latvian variation of this semantheme, and also locates it at the far west, where the Sun sleeps at night. However, he admits that the same World Tree also grows in the underworld, and as it is depicted in fairy tales (*ibid.*, p.34) the other locations of the Sun Tree are considered to be a deformation of the original myth (*ibid.*, p.26). This is explained either by a poetic play of words or by mythical syncretism, where other trees acquire the characteristics of the Sun Tree. There are also several other places where Adamovičs speaks of the profanation or degradation of original mythical notions. For example, regarding the folklore materials where the Sun Tree could have been found by a shepherd's girl (*ibid.*, p.17) or God could hide in a bush of wormwood or mugwort⁴ (*ibid.*, p.29), or sleep under the grey stone (*ibid.*, p.28). Such a devolutionist view of the myth is somewhat contradictory to his notion of the 'natural base' as the primary source of the mythical imagination. Mythical semanthemes are not only grounded in this 'natural base', but also designate the more ancient, older level of the world-view. With regard to various themes, Adamovičs states that this or another notion has already evolved from its natural base, that is, physical object. God as the sky and the Sun as the sun are primary images. The greater their anthropomorphic features, the later the stage of mythological development they characterise (Adamovičs 1938, pp.11, 25, 31). Such a development also implies several world structures, from 'less developed' or 'nature like' to 'more developed', with the Heavenly Yard and its inhabitants characterised by an elaborated social structure.

Another interesting question in Adamovičs' mythical world order concerns Vāczeme. Its literary translation is 'Land of the Germans', and the contemporary name in the Latvian language for Germany is Vācija, a shortened form of Vāczeme. In several folk songs, it bears characteristics of the netherworld. Pēteris Šmits admits that theorists leaning towards animism consider Vāczeme as a land of the dead, while he explains these characteristics as a simple misunderstanding, because Germany is located to the west of Latvia (Šmits 1926, p.65). Adamovičs makes only a cursory reference to this question, stating that Vāczeme meant to ancient Latvians 'a place of otherness', due to an encounter with the different culture brought to Latvia by the Germans. At the same time, he admits that many mythical elements in descriptions of Vāczeme require special attention, and Vāczeme is not only a place of otherness,

⁴ *Artemisia absinthium* and *Artemisia vulgaris*, widespread slightly hallucinogenic plants.

but also of wrong-way-roundness (Adamovičs 1938, pp.20-21). This description also applies to the Opposite World, where Straubergs (1937, p.171) locates the 'home of the Sun, Moon, God, and all higher powers, and souls' (Adamovičs 1938, p.19). While Straubergs claims that the idea of God and God's location in Heaven is comparatively new, Adamovičs states that both the Sun and God live in Heaven, and that: '... a special home of the gods and dead souls far away on the horizon is not the primary independent concept, but only a transitional combination' (*ibid.*, p.31).

Instead, Adamovičs proposes that the Sun, God, God's sons and other deities spend their nights in the Great Heavenly Yard. That is generally everything that the author writes about Heaven, the third level of the world. The situation is much different regarding the underworld. Adamovičs refers to many fairy tales describing various paths to the underworld (caves, wells, springs) and out of it (directly, across the sea, by flying), locations of those entrances and exits both in this world and the far west, inhabitants of the underworld, and the quests of heroes. The question of the home of dead souls, a subject not considered by Adamovičs, remains problematic in this tripartite world-structure. Other issues discussed in the *Ancient Latvian World View* are also characteristic of other scholarly products of the interwar period, acquiring the most comprehensive form in this essay by Adamovičs, and interpreted according to the theories he preferred.

Haralds Biezais

The next case provides an insight into the research of the Latvian mythological space a couple of decades later, across the Baltic Sea, and in a totally different academic and political environment. The theologian, priest and historian of religion Haralds Biezais (1909–1995) was definitely the most influential researcher into Latvian mythology after the Second World War. Biezais studied in Zurich and Strasbourg, but gained his theology doctorate from the University of Latvia. Living during the interwar period in Latvia, his interests were related mostly to theology and pastoral practice. After the Soviet occupation in 1944, he left Latvia and went into exile to Sweden. Besides his clerical duties, he became an assistant to the Chair of Systematic Theology at the University of Uppsala, at the same time as studying philosophy and history. Therefore, the first of his main works in the field of Latvian mythology was his doctoral thesis *Die Hauptgöttinnen der alten Letten* (1955). It was later followed by the fundamental monographs *Die Gottesgestalt der lettischen Volksreligion* (1961), *Die himmlische Götterfamilie der alten Letten* (1972) and *Lichtgott der alten Letten*

(1976), numerous articles, entries in encyclopaedias, and presentations at conferences. In 1971, Biezais accepted a professorship of religious history from the Faculty of Theology at the University of Åbo/Turku in Finland (Pakalns 2006; Leitāne 2008).

In some respects, Biezais continues a previous research tradition: it is his interest in genuinely Latvian material in the reconstruction of mythology that in a way borders on a scrupulous purism excluding all possible influences. His Latvian mythology is mostly folk song mythology, due to the folk song status of most Latvian folklore material. All his main works are dedicated to the Latvian pantheon, while references to his research are usually encountered in works on Baltic mythology. For example, his article (2010) on Baltic religion in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* is dedicated to the Baltic region, but based mostly on material related to Latvian mythology. Biezais' interest in Latvian polytheism which relates to concepts of kingship in Indo-European mythology and his lack of interest in lower mythological beings and chthonic deities have also been interpreted as being particularly characteristic of the Latvian political or psychological exile position and a strategy of dissociation (Leitāne 2008).

Questioning many conclusions drawn by Adamovičs and other interwar researchers, Biezais describes mythological space in the chapter 'World-View and Mythical World Outlook' in *Heavenly Gods' Family of Ancient Latvians* (1998 [1972], pp.136-188), analysing also particular motifs in detail in *The Image of God in Latvian Folk Religion* (2008 [1961], pp.81-87). In 'World-View and Mythical World Outlook', Biezais warns that his aim is not to give a complete description or an explanation of the ancient Latvian world-view, but only to explore moments 'that are related to the sun and its role in mythical and religious experiences' (Biezais 1998, p.136). Still, his description of the world structure is rather comprehensive. Biezais also does not get into difficulties relating mythical phenomena to their precise natural base, admitting that the interpretation of myths is about meaning rather than images (Biezais 1998, p.136; 2008, p.67). Instead, his interpretations have a more social insight, on the one hand reconstructing the heavenly family, and on the other hand relating it to the peasant psychology. His disagreement with interwar period researchers like Adamovičs, Straubergs, and to some extent Eduards Zicāns, is mainly limited to a differing evaluation of folklore genres. As a matter of fact, his interpretation leads to almost exclusively folk song mythology. Biezais is aware of a thick layer of Christian syncretism in folk songs. Although most of them were collected during the 19th century or later, the author states with certainty that the Latvian peasant from whom songs are collected lived at that time in a

world of religious notions that are closely related to his pre-Christian religion (Biezais 1998, p.141). This is in stark contrast to his view of fairy tales: he claims that Latvian fairy tales and the views included in them represent 'shared traditions of European culture', and therefore reflect rather Christian views (*ibid.*, p.145). On this basis, he contests the tripartite world structure promoted by Straubergs (1922) and Adamovičs (1938), because both of them referred to fairy tales only. As an alternative to this, Biezais offers a simple division of 'this world' and an invisible other world, where the latter is inhabited by dead souls, dwelling in an environment more or less similar to 'this world' (Biezais 1998, p.144). According to him, the location of this realm of dead souls is somewhat virtual, rather than being located in some particular region of mythical geography, the far west, or elsewhere.

Interpreting folk songs, Biezais comes to the same conclusion as Adamovičs regarding the Heavenly Mountain: it represents the sky. The sun travels across or around it in a circular movement. Biezais explains variations of this movement in different folk songs as 'varying perceptions of individual creators of the texts', thus making him the first to consider the role of tradition-bearers in Latvian mythological narratives. His interpretation of the World Sea is also interesting. Biezais argues that neither the notion of the World Sea surrounding the entire Earth nor the notion of the underground sea are clearly expressed in folklore material or other sources of Latvian mythology (Biezais 1998, p.174), and that therefore such notions have to be left out of consideration if we are to remain within the material of Latvian folklore only. He also denies Adamovičs' already-mentioned argument that the sea is substituted by other water bodies in eastern Latvia, due to the lack of the presence of the real sea, referring to folk songs recorded in the very east of Latvia that mention the sunset at sea. At the same time, he disagrees with Straubergs (1937), and proposes the sea as another metaphor for Heaven (Biezais 1998, pp.175-176). Moreover, he further states that this notion could be older than the idea of the Heavenly Mountain, though neither view is contradictory.

While other researchers using fairy tale material have described the underworld in detail, Biezais pays special attention to Heaven and to the Heavenly Yard. The hosts of this realm are the Sun and God (Biezais 1998, p.146; 2008, p.81). The Heavenly Yard has also been described earlier (Adamovičs 1940c). What is new about the work of Biezais is his caution regarding the construction of the Heavenly Yard from separate semanthemes scattered across the body of folklore material. He supposes that the buildings of God's household are located around the central yard, that there are three

springs, and that the surroundings consist of forests of oak, lime, pine, birch and spruce. Silk meadows and golden mountains, gardens, rivers, springs and the sea are also part of ancient Latvian heavenly topography (Biezais 2008, p.86). Still, he admits that there is no direct evidence about God's house or the Heavenly Yard in folk songs (*ibid.*, p.81); therefore, those images are deduced from the descriptions of actions of God, his sons and other inhabitants of the realm, and also from particular semanthemes like 'God's front door' (Pakalns 1992). His final conclusion is as follows: 'Due to poor sources, only the fact that God also has his house in Heaven must be accepted' (Biezais 2008, p.84). Nevertheless, there is one building from the Heavenly Yard that has attracted the special attention of the author, the Heavenly Bath-house or Sauna. It has all the common celestial mythical signifiers: gold, silver and diamonds. Somewhat problematic is only the fact that it is almost never mentioned in connection with God, at least not in sources Biezais trusts. Instead, in this bath-house we can more often encounter sons of God and daughters of the Sun, and sometimes also the Moon and other celestial deities (*ibid.*, p.325). Analysing the meaning of this semantheme, Biezais reaches several conclusions that are important for his scholarly agenda in general. First of all, it is a direct all-embracing correlation of empirical reality and transcendental realms. Therefore, the special place of the bath-house in the Heavenly Yard is derived from its special place in the Latvian peasant's household, as the place of birth, various rituals, and the dwelling place of several lower mythological beings. This also implies a shift in religious studies from texts to contexts. As Biezais writes: 'In a broader interconnection, this uncommon feature of Latvian mythology supports the direction of research that demands that religious studies pay more attention to the ecological facet' (*ibid.*, p.327).

Furthermore, the Heavenly Bath-house seems to be unique to Latvian mythology, with no direct analogies in other religions (*ibid.*). This shows the interrelation of comparative studies with nationally oriented research based on the folklore material of one language group only, and confirms ethnic mythology as a particular object of study, because features like this would go unnoticed when researching older or broader levels of mythological notions like Baltic or Indo-European mythology. In summary, Haralds Biezais has a particular opinion of folklore genres which has shaped his interpretation of the Ancient Latvian mythological space. The latter in this particular case could be more specifically called the mythological space of folk songs;

therefore, several unique structures are left outside his model.

Janīna Kursīte

The third case, enlightening the dynamics of the research, is the latest publication on the Latvian mythological space by Professor Janīna Kursīte. A member of parliament, dean of the former Faculty of Philology of the University of Latvia, vice-rector of the Academy of Culture (1995–1997), and full member of the Latvian Academy of Sciences since 1997, these are just some of her current and previous positions that make her one of the most influential, if not the most influential folklorist in Latvia today. Trained at the Faculty of Philology at the University of Tartu in the early Seventies, she continued her academic career at the Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art in Riga, acquiring a PhD in philology⁵ in 1982 and a habilitated doctor's degree in philology in 1993 (Latvian Scientists 2010). Kursīte's scholarly interests are manifested in publications, the organisation of fieldwork and courses⁶ given at the University of Latvia ranging from Baltic mythology and Latvian folklore to the poetics of poetry and the national identity.

In an essay on mythological space published in the book *The Mythical in Folklore, Literature, Art* (1999), Kursīte provides a brief draft of the Latvian mythological space. Unfortunately, there are very few references to folklore material or works previously written on the subject. On the most abstract level, Kursīte conceptualises mythical space as heterogeneous. Referring to Mircea Eliade, she characterises this heterogeneity in terms of 'sacrality' and 'chaos', where sacral spaces are surrounded by unshaped, chaotic realms (Kursīte 1999, p.499). Her other principle of categorisation is binary oppositions: in this case, the opposition of the middle and the side is mentioned more often. These abstract principles are illustrated by examples of various spatial semanthemes, in many cases reducing the meanings of these semanthemes to prototypical situations in the initiation or creation of the world. Interestingly, despite the discussion in the early 1930s and the critique by Biezais (Adamovičs 1938; 1940c; Biezais *et al.* 1998), Kursīte, without any reference to folklore or other material, claims that 'mythological space traditionally divides into two parts (this and the other world), or three parts (Heaven, Earth, the underworld)' (Kursīte 1999, p.500). Moreover, 'mythical space as a

⁵ PhD, Candidate of Sciences in the former USSR, the equivalent of a PhD in Western countries.

⁶ Latvian Folklore, Mythology of the Balts, Finno-Ugric Folklore, Folklore and Literature, Theory of Literature, etc.

whole consists of nine separate parts' (*ibid.*). As there are no direct descriptions of such a space of nine parts, this division is derived from the significance of the number nine in Latvian folklore and its frequent appearance together with spatial signifiers, such as nine lakes, nine seas, nine doors, nine leaves of a (cosmic) tree, and so on. This division into nine parts is supported by comparative references to Scandinavian and Hindu myths.

Kursīte distinguishes the other world as an opposite realm of 'this world', wherever the former is located, in Heaven, under the Earth, or on another level of the same Earth, or in Vāczeme, or the far west. Kursīte lists all these variations as equally valid, paying more attention to the diverse ways that lead to the other world. These are various plants growing up to Heaven, caves and holes leading to the underworld, ways across the water, and simply losing one's way in the common environment. Almost all these ways are mentioned only in fairy tales. Kursīte only briefly touches upon the question of Vāczeme, identifying it with the land of dead souls and putting it in the way of the Sun. There, the land of the dead is described as a 'zone of numbness' (*ibid.*, p.501), otherwise rather similar to this world. Describing the dialectics of the middle and sides, Kursīte emphasises the connection of their meanings with ritual practices: the symbolic re-creation of the world (*ibid.*, p.503), or sacrifice to chthonic deities (*ibid.*, p.504). The middle is described as an ambivalent place, according to different folklore material; it can be the safest and the most dangerous place in the mythical space. She relates both the middle and the sides to rites of passage. The status of places shifts according to binary oppositions: where the middle is safe, the sides are dangerous, and vice versa. Kursīte also somewhat briefly notes that there is a mythical view of the southern direction as being better than the north. The concept of sacred 'mini-spaces', holy places, springs, mountains, and so on, where the rituals took place, is also derived from a notion of the heterogeneity of space (*ibid.*, p.505).

Another chapter of the same book is devoted to the mythical River Daugava. According to the aforementioned division of the sacred and profane worlds, Kursīte writes that: 'The river, like a spring, a lake, water in general, and trees, groves and stones and caves, belong to ancient sacral objects' (Kursīte 1999, p.83). Therefore, the actual River Daugava is not a projection of something (Adamovičs 1938), but a sacred river localised in both this and the other world. It is 'the main mythical river' of Latvia (Kursīte 1999, p.94). The author mentions that the Sun Tree grows in the Daugava, but does not relate it to the sun's orbit in the

sky. Instead, she emphasises the function of spatial division: 'When created, the Daugava becomes a border between orderly and chaotic space, this and the other world, safe and dangerous, familiar and alien worlds, as well as those of humans and deities' (*ibid.*, p.95).

The realm of dead souls is also located in a copper garden across the Daugava. Kursīte mentions the riverside as a place where initiation rites are performed. As such, the riverside or bank of the Daugava bears a special importance. As a water body, the Daugava is also the place where life emerges; at the same time, it is the path of dead souls that leads them to the realm of the dead (*ibid.*, p.103).

In brief, Kursīte interprets different spatial semantemes within a structural framework of binary oppositions, rather than trying to map out mythical space as a whole. Her interpretive standpoint is rooted in the notion of sacrality as an agency of meaning on the one hand and an understanding of folklore as a narrative of cosmogonic myths, and, on the other hand, rites of passage as the most important part of the life of ancient man's life (Kursīte 1991). As such, her approach is very flexible, and provides almost endless possibilities for interpreting folklore material, letting contradictory versions coexist within one discourse. Kursīte offers an omnipresent harmony of microcosm and macrocosm, represented in multiple mythical situations. Even more, her particular theory on the mnemonic function of folklore genres allows for the use of a range of material that is broader than ever before:

'It is characteristic of Latvian folklore that usually information about one and the same object is not repeated among its different genres. Fairy tales and legends compliment or extend what is said, for example, about rivers, lakes and the sea in folk songs. Probably this way, ancient man, who was able to store and save information (first of all sacral information) by heart only, saved space in the blocks of his memory. What is preserved in the rhyming language of folk songs cannot be duplicated in the plain language of fairy tales and legends. For a long time, research into Latvian mythical views has been based mainly on material from folk songs, with virtually no reference to fairy tales, legends, charms, beliefs and other folklore genres' (Kursīte 1999, p.93).

Structural analysis and an interest in proto-myths is characteristic of scholars of the Moscow-Tartu School of Semiotics. The author herself also refers to the work of Vladimir Toporov and Eleazer Meletinskii as being what has inspired her (Kursīte 1999, p.9). Based only on her interpretation of folklore material, her approach leaves out the question of the historicity of mythology,

creating a reconstruction of a somewhat virtual, time-less world-view.

Conclusion

As follows from the three case studies analysed above, reconstructions of Latvian mythological space have taken rather different forms, despite the more or less similar availability of folklore material and historical records. Adamovičs' programme of research consists of mapping out mythical geography; whereas Biezais describes mythical space rather indirectly, that is, how far it is related to celestial deities; and Kursīte, with the help of the notion of sacrality, outlines mythical dispositions in real landscapes. Nevertheless, the basic components of all three reconstructions are the same: a tripartite division of the world, the Heavenly Mountain, the World Sea, the Sun's orbit, and passages to other worlds. Interpretations and locations of these phenomena vary, including or excluding some of them from the subject of the research, the Latvian mythological space. Mythological time plays a rather minor role in reconstructions of mythological space: it is mentioned as an anomaly (Adamovičs 1938) of the underworld, or eternally repeated time of the creation ritual (Kursīte 1999) characteristic of specific domains of the mythical world. At the same time, the study illustrates the importance of scholarly time in research into mythological space.

Mythological research, like any other scholarly practice, is historically determined; and yet it does not illustrate a linear development. On the most obvious level, reconstructions of mythological space depend on the theoretical standpoints of researchers. The theory of mythical semanthemes derived from a natural base restricts Adamovičs' reconstruction of mythical space; while the relation of the same semanthemes to rites of passage and cosmogonic proto-myth provides Kursīte with some freedom of interpretation. A comparative view of the World Tree, World Sea or tripartite structure can serve in a hierarchical ordering of images (Adamovičs 1938), a reserved attitude towards one of them (Biezais 1998), or unconditional acceptance (Kursīte 1999). Perhaps the most influential theories in the reconstruction of mythological space are those regarding folklore genres. The cases of Biezais and Kursīte illustrate this best. Whereas the former bases his model of Latvian mythological space on folk song mythology, excluding fairy tales, charms and other narrative folklore material, Kursīte refers to mnemonic functions of genre division and explores folklore of all genres. Then again, Kursīte does not verify her material with historical reports, and does not try to separate

different periods of the development of Latvian mythology and the corresponding world-view.

It is much harder to draw conclusions at the meta-level of analysis. However, even if we cannot say for sure what the roles of the researcher's personality, political standing, academic position, ideological background and other similar circumstances have played in the choice of one interpretive stance, theory or another, it is still worth considering these various contexts as essential to an understanding of particular texts. If the quest for national uniqueness in mythological themes cannot be explained through the relationship of folkloristics and the idea of the nation-state, if a discussion of previous research or the lack of such a discussion cannot be attributed to the researcher's academic position or political influence, if the depiction of the all-embracing harmony of the micro- and macro-cosmos cannot be explained by the popular nature of a particular publication, and an interest in celestial deities by a particular exile mentality, these factors can still be influential, and therefore must not be left out of the analysis of Latvian mythology and the notion of mythological space within it.

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LATVIŲ MITOLOGIJOS ERDVĒ IR MOKSLINIS LAIKAS

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Santrauka

Mitinę erdvę apibrēžia ir istorinēs jos tyrimo sāļygos. Laikas, kada vykdomas tyrimas, yra diachroninis, nevienalytis ir atviras įvairioms įtakoms; jis suteikia galimybę klasifikuoti jau tyrinėtus dalykus ir brėžti skirtingas trajektorijas pasirinkto tyrimo objekto interpretacijose. Latvių mitologijos tyrimus visais lai-

kais veikė įtampa tarp etninių, regioninių, kalbinių ir politinių veiksmių. Kadangi nėra žinių apie tikslią, pačių latvių sukurtą mitinio pasaulio struktūrą apibrėžiančią teoriją, latvių mitinę erdvę galima pažinti tik iš mokslinių rekonstrukcijų ir interpretacijų. Šios rekonstrukcijos daugiausia buvo paremtos dviem šaltinių grupėmis – istoriniais aprašais ir folkloro medžiaga. Pačiu svarbiausiu šaltiniu latvių mitologijos rekonstrukcijose tapo liaudies dainos. Trijų atvejų analizė rodo, kad nepaisant daugiau ar mažiau vienodo šaltinių prieinamumo, latvių mitinės erdvės rekonstrukcijų trajektorijos pasuko gana skirtingomis kryptimis. Liudvigo Adamovičiaus (1884–1943) darbuose ryški mitinės erdvės conceptualizacija ir aprašymas, kurie būdingi senovės religijos tyrimams tarpukariu; pokario metais išeivijos akademinėje aplinkoje jo pažiūros paneigė ir išplėtojo Haraldas Biezais (1909–1995); tuo tarpu Janinos Kursytės atlikti mitinės erdvės tyrimai, kuriuose atsižvelgiama į visus ankstesnius tyrimus ir remiamasi semantinė-struktūrine analize, atstovauja naujausiai mokslinei šios srities produkcijai.

Liudvigas Adamovičius siūlo nubraižyti mitinės geografinės žemėlapi, Heraldas Biezais mitinę erdvę aprašo gana netiesiogiai, t. y. tiek, kiek ji susijusi su dangiškosiomis dievybėmis, o mūsų laikų mokslininkė Janina Kursytė, pasitelkdama šventumo sąvoką, mitinę sąrangą susieja ir su realiais gamtos objektais. Vis dėlto visose trijose rekonstrukcijose kartojasi tos pačios pagrindinės sudedamosios dalys – trinarė pasaulio struktūra, Dangaus kalnas, Pasaulio jūra, Saulės orbita ir keliai į kitus pasaulius. Šių fenomenų interpretacijos ir lokalizacija įvairuoja, kai kuriuos jų įvardijant arba neįvardijant kaip latvių mitologinės erdvės tyrimo objektus. Mitinis laikas mitinės erdvės rekonstrukcijose atlieka gana nežymų vaidmenį: jis minimas kaip anomalija požeminiame pasaulyje arba amžinai besikartojantis kūrimo ritualo laikas, būdingas tam tikroms mitinio pasaulio sferoms. Mitologijos tyrimai, kaip ir bet kuri kita mokslinė veikla, yra apibrėžta istoriškai, tačiau linijinės raidos neatspindi. Akivaizdu, kad mitinės erdvės rekonstrukcijos priklauso nuo tyrėjų teorinių nuostatų. Mitinių semantų teorija leido atsirasti Adamovičiaus mitinės erdvės rekonstrukcijai, o tų pačių semantų ryšys su perėjimo ritualais ir pirminiu kosmogoniniu mitu Kursytei suteikė interpretacijos laisvę. Komparatyvistinį požiūrį į Pasaulio medį, Pasaulio jūrą arba trinarę struktūrą Adamovičius panaudoja hierarchiniam vaizdinių išdėstymui, Biezais susitelkia tik į vieną iš minėtų komponentų, o Kursytė besąlygiškai priima juos visus. Didžiausią įtaką mitinės erdvės rekonstrukcijoms turėjo su folkloro žanrais siejamos teorijos. Biezais savąjį latvių mitinės erdvės modelį grindžia liaudies dainų mitologija, tuo tarpu Kursytė remiasi mnemoninėmis išsiskyrusių žanrų

funkcijomis ir tyrinėja visų žanrų folklorą. Vis dėlto Kursytė savo medžiagos nelygina su istoriniais duomenimis ir nebando išskirti atskirų latvių mitologijos vystymosi etapų bei juos atspindinčių pasaulėžiūrų.

Nors negalima būti tikriems dėl to, kokį vaidmenį renkantis interpretacijos kryptį, teoriją ar tam tikrą požiūrio tašką atliko tyrėjo asmenybė, politinės nuostatos, akademinis statusas, ideologija ir kitos panašios aplinkybės, šiuos įvairius kontekstus vis tiek verta traktuoti kaip svarbius tam tikrų tekstų supratimui. Net jei tautinės vienybės paieškų mitologinėse temose ir negalima paaiškinti sąryšiu tarp folkloristikos ir tautinės valstybės idėjos, o anksčiau atliktų tyrimų aptarimo arba neaptarimo negalima paaiškinti tyrėjo akademinio statusu ar politinėmis įtakomis, jei visa apimančios harmonijos tarp mikro- ir makrokosmoso negalima paaiškinti populistiniu tam tikros publikacijos pobūdžiu, o domėjimosi dangaus dievybėmis – savotišku išeivijos mentalitetu, tie veiksniai vis tiek gali būti reikšmingi, ir todėl analizuojant latvių mitologiją ir mitinės erdvės sampratą joje negali likti nuošalėje.

Vertė Jurgita Macijauskaitė-Bonda

II

BALTIC
WORLDVIEW:
FROM
MYTHOLOGY
TO FOLKLORE